

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

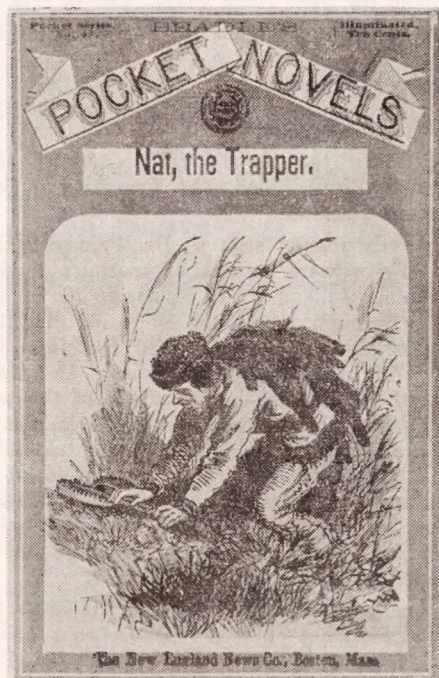
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June 15, 1972

Whole No. 477

TREASURE ISLAND

By W. O. G. Lofts



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 150

BEADLES POCKET NOVELS

Publisher: Beadle & Adams, 98 William St., New York, N. Y. Issues: 272. Dates: July 7, 1874 to November 25, 1884. Schedule of Issue: bi-monthly. Size: 6½x4¼". Price: 10c. Illustrations: Hand-stenciled colored cover. Contents: Reprints of stories appearing in Beadles Dime Novels and Frank Starr's American Novels.

TREASURE ISLAND

By W. O. G. Lofts

Fifteen men on the dead man's chest,
Yo-Ho-Ho, and a bottle of rum.
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,
Yo-Ho-Ho, and a bottle of rum.

Pirates, and especially buried treasure, have always greatly fascinated me. When I was commissioned some years ago by Leslie Charteris to write up a potted history of piracy for the SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE, I never have enjoyed myself more in "digging" up as it were the treasures of research and authentic facts in various museums and record offices. Pirate stories have of course, always played a large part in the history of boys publications. Easily the best and most remembered in England was Cassells CHUMS (1892-1941) which is mainly found and collected these days in the yearly Annual form. What thrilling, and bloodthirsty tales these were! Samuel Walkey who wrote most of them for over forty years, was in real life the Staff Controller of a bank in Cornwall, and he penned these stories only in his spare time, and as a sideline.

Swashbuckling tales of Buccaneers were his specialty and his titles were such ones as "Rogues of the Fiery Cross," "Yo Ho for the Spanish Main," "Under the Pirate Flag," "Flame Beard's Treasure," and "The Pirates of Skelton Island." His villains bore the blood-curdling names of Captain Cripple, Sharkteeth, The Terrible Blind Judas, The Treacherous Salvation Meek, and The Murderous Cheat-the-Gallows.

His heroes were aptly named such as Dr. Primrose, Tallifer True-Blade, and Captain Angel. There were stories of treasure buried at midnight on Coffin Island, of Spanish Galleons, full of doubloons, wrecked and stuck on treacherous reefs, and guarded sometimes by weird gigantic monsters of the unknown deep. Stories also appeared of the ferocious Brotherhood of the Spanish Main, led by Admiral Rob, whose cruelty and black-hearted villainy would have put some of the present-day criminals of the world to shame. Of Buccaneers fighting against the cruel overseers of the slave plantation in the West Indies. Pirates captured and tortured by the dreaded black-robed fiends of the Spanish Inquisition. Other stirring tales, told of noble blue-blooded Englishmen forced to walk the plank to the jeers and taunts of the pirates because they refused to join their crews: with cutlasses pointed at their back they walked to certain death and the hungry sharks below (at least until the commencement of next weeks thrilling instalment).

We read of the quest of a band of English Adventurers in search of loot of a certain Captain Crossbones—buried treasure chests filled with gold, and the traditional pieces of eight; the only clue being a faded parchment containing doggeral verse . . .

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On Crossbones Isle, near Spanish Key,
There is a ruby, hidden by me.
Seek it, and let the Pirate's Skull become your guide.
To the vast treasures of the mountainside.

One actually felt one was there, with the brave and daring adventurers. As well as chills and thrills, these stories contained such vivid descriptive prose such as "flaming tropical skies of abysmal blue," "wonderful seas of sapphire and emerald creaming to white upon coral beaches," "Desert islands fringed with coconut palms, deep blue lagoons and white shimmering sands." There was the crash of broadsides as the ships clashed in combat: the crack of flintlocks, pistols and the rattle of musket shots, clouds of pungent gunpowder smoke, and the flash of cutlasses in the turmoil of battle.

Yet, despite these wonderful stories in CHUMS, and numerous other boys papers, there is no question at all, that the greatest pirate story ever written was Robert Louis Stevenson's immortal classic TREASURE ISLAND. Curiously enough, and unknown to the great majority of people, is that this did originally appear in a juvenile publication a few years previous to its first published book form in 1893. More strangely still, if a curious train of events had not occurred in Stevenson's life, TREASURE ISLAND may not have been written at all!

Robert Louis Stevenson, novelist, essayist, poet, and traveller, was born at Edinburgh on the 13th November 1850. He was actually baptised Robert Lewis Balfour, but he later dropped the "Balfour" completely, and changed the "Lewis" to "Louis." His health from the very beginning was to say the least extremely poor, suffering from acute bronchial affections and fevers all his life, which forced him to always seek warmer and sunnier climates, from the cold and damp of the Highlands. It was whilst travelling in the South of France that he met an American woman, separated from her husband, and named Mrs. Osbourne. She was accompanied by her young son Samuel Lloyd.

Divorced finally from her husband, Mrs. Osbourne eventually married Stevenson out in California, where they settled back at Castleton in Braemar, Scotland. Stevenson by this time had grown greatly fond of his new stepson, whom he affectionately called "Sam." Young Samuel who was extremely intelligent, and was also greatly interested in writing and the arts, spent most of his pastime writing his own boyish stories complete with woodcuts. Mainly to relieve the tedium of a schoolboy, and to give him every encouragement, Stevenson started to write chapters of TREASURE ISLAND. These it should be said were prompted by the rough sketch of a map, and although intended for Samuel, they were read regularly to the family circle, being based on suggestions and reminiscences from his father's own seafaring experiences. Above all, it also should be recorded that Stevenson entitled his story THE SEA COOK.

A visitor to the family home, was a certain Dr. Alexander Hay Japp, a distinguished man of letters, and also editor of the James Henderson publication "Good Words." So enthralled was Dr. Japp in hearing Stevenson reciting an instalment of this story in his rich clear tones, that he persuaded him to rewrite the story from the beginning again with a view to publication. So the outcome was that when Dr. Japp left Castleton he carried with him a considerable portion of the manuscript, with an outline for the rest of the story. James Henderson the editor and proprietor of Young Folks, was likewise impressed by it, and decided to publish it in serial form in his boys and girls publication.

Henderson did however feel that the title of THE SEA COOK was not

striking enough, and so he changed it to TREASURE ISLAND. He also thought that a pen-name of that of a mythical sea-captain would give the serial more authenticity. TREASURE ISLAND, sub-titled, OR, THE WRECK OF THE HISPANIOLA commenced in YOUNG FOLKS (sub-titled "A Boys and girls paper of Instruction and Entertaining Literature") Vol. XIX No. 565 dated October 1st 1881 in the Michaelmas Double Number supplement. It was illustrated by two woodcuts the principal one representing Billy Bones chasing Black Dog out of "The Admiral Benbow," but no further instalments received the honor of an illustration. It ran until Vol. XX No. 582, dated January 1882, and Stevenson actually finished writing the story among the pine-woods of Davos, where he had been forced to convalesce after another serious bout of illness. Stevenson was paid at the rate of 12/6d a column, and was in later years to express the remark "that it appeared duly in Young Folks, where it figured in the ignoble midst without woodcuts," though presumably he meant after the first issue. It is stated on very good authority that TREASURE ISLAND was something of a failure as a serial, and met with very little response and enthusiasm with readers, though his later serials KIDNAPPED and THE BLACK ARROW which appeared in the same paper were far more successful. A few alterations were made in preparing TREASURE ISLAND for publication in book form, but only in one instance was a chapter heading altered in "At the sign of the Spy Glass" (Chapter VIII) for "The Sea Cook." The latter name was however, still retained as the title of Part II. The first edition appeared in 1883, and it appeared of course under his own name, and was dedicated to S. L. O. An American Gentleman who was of course Samuel Lloyd Osbourne. There does seem confusion in literary circles as to the exact first edition as seemingly several different copies were issued simultaneously, in scarlet, sage green, and blue, published by Cassell & Company. London/Paris/New York. Pages VIII, and 2-292. Cro. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ x5 inches. Dated 1883. Gold letters on spine of title, and two pages of advertisements at the back. Some copies having the title on the front cover. The late Mrs. Victoria Graydon, wife of the late Robert Murray Graydon, son of well known American writer in our circle William Murray Graydon once had a first edition autographed with a message by Robert Louis Stevenson, whom he (Graydon) met once in America. This was unfortunately lost in the process of moving house in the 1940s. TREASURE ISLAND of course with its immortal characters, of Long John Silver, Jack Hawkins, Israel Hands, Ben Gunn, and the parrot "Captain Flint," soon became a classic when one reviewer commented "In this story, the force of invention and vividness of narrative, appealed to every reader, and it has taken its place in literature as a classic story of pirate, and mutineer adventure."

Stevenson, as we know in history, was forced eventually to retire to warmer climates with worsening ill-health, and was living at Samoa, when he died suddenly on December 3rd, 1894, and was buried on a romantic site of his own selection. It took 60 natives to cut a path and carry him to a peak of the forest-clad Mount Vaea. A place so apt, where buried treasure may have been hidden. Since TREASURE ISLAND first appeared in print, plays based on the story have appeared in almost every country in the world, whilst surprising, the film companies did not make the first until 1920, when Charles Ogle was Long John Silver, and Jim Hawkins (like the traditional pantomime) played by a girl—Shirley Mason with Maurice Tourneur directing. 1935 saw Wallace Beery and Jackie Cooper in the title roles for MGM Director Victor Fleming. 1950 saw Walt Disney Productions have Robert Newton with the rich accent and rolling eyes, who was born for the part—when he has been described as "Gods gift to impersonators" as Long John, and Bobby

Driscoll as Hawkins. Newton afterwards played the role in a feature in 1954 entitled **LONG JOHN SILVER**, and 26 TV half-hours filmed in Australia.

It's strange when one considers how history is made in literature, fascinating could be a far better word. If Stevenson had not pursued his attentions on an already married woman (which his family strongly objected to) and had not been compelled to travel to the South of France for his health, he would never have met Samuel. If Dr. Japp had not visited his home in Scotland and heard the story, generations of people would never have read *Treasure Island*, nor would millions of people in the future, as obviously this classic story will be with mankind for all time.

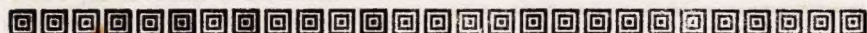
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Special Notes:

1. The Dead Man's Chest, is not as most people may think. It was actually an islet in the Caribbean Sea, formerly much frequently used by pirates. Stevenson tells us that he first got the name with all its weird suggestiveness from Kingsley's "At Last."

2. Some Encyclopaedias say that **TREASURE ISLAND** was titled **THE SEA COOK** in "Young Folks"—but they are obviously incorrect as a look at a copy of the paper will show. This faulty data is also given in some works of classical literature, including the Oxford edition.

3. A reliable R. L. Stevenson Bibliography says that "the first instalment in **YOUNG FOLKS** had only one woodcut." There were actually two, a third appearing in the center of the first page belonging to another story.



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2. Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Border, by Edward S. Ellis. N. Y. Irwin P. Beadle and Company, 1860. 123 pages.
3. The Life and Times of Daniel Boone, by Edward S. Ellis. N. Y. Beadle & Co. 1860. 96 pages.
4. Massasoit's Daughter; or, The French Captives, by A. J. H. Duganne. N. Y. and London, Beadle & Co. 1861, 115 pages.
5. Single Eye: A Story of King Phillip's War, by Warren St. John. Beadle & Co. N. Y. and London, 1863, 124 pages.

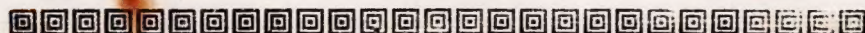
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FROM TIP TOP WEEKLY No. 738
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RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

THE DIME NOVEL AND THE AMERICAN MIND, by Michael K. Simmons. In Vol. 2, No. 3, October 1969, issue of MANKIND published by Mankind Pub. Co., 8060 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046. A review of the early dime novels by a Penn State American literature instructor. It covers the dime novel period with a broad brush, but covering only the twenty years during which the pocket size novels were popular. The remaining years of the dime novel era are considered to have become "increasingly lurid and repulsive," terminology I am sure most dime novel collectors would not agree with.

A DIME NOVEL COLLECTOR'S BOOK SHELF

VALUE GUIDE TO OLD BOOKS, MAGAZINES, COMICS, DIME NOVELS, by Maxwell J. Seeley. Suite 404, 1253 McGill College Avenue, Montreal 110 P. Q., Canada. A short but concise guide to prices of most paper Americana including a page devoted to dime novel values.

The next issue of the Dime Novel Roundup will be a large number containing the last article written by J. Edward Leithead. It is titled **ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY AND THE TED STRONG SAGA**. The article traces the history of Ted Strong in story as well as a complete bibliography of all printed appearances with full reprinting information.

Mr. Jack Schorr writes in the sad news that Al Vogt of Monterey Park, California died on February 28, 1972. Al was born January 9, 1909 in Buffalo, New York. He is survived by his widow, a son and a daughter. He was an avid collector of cloth bound boys books and had accumulated thousands.

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